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ABSTRACT

This document consists of four issues of a quarterly newsletter focusing on knowledge management. Articles include: "Who Are the Knowledge Management Role Players?"; "Integrating Human Resources"; "Knowledge Management: An Integrated Science?"; and "The Knowledge Management Plan." Included in the Spring newsletter is a list of additional reading in knowledge management. Discussion focuses on the librarian's role; education and training; maintaining knowledge in small and large corporations; and environmental analysis, assessment, and missions and goals. (AEF)

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**Knowtes: The Knowledge Management Thinkletter
Volume 1 Nos. 1-4
1997**

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Knowtes

The Knowledge Management Thinkletter

by Burton Knowledge Services

Vol. I, No. I, Winter 1997

Who are the Knowledge Management Role Players?

Knowledge Management didn't take long to be one of those corporate buzzwords. Soon after, different professions scrambled to claim it in their job titles. An Internet news group search on knowledge management turned up mostly job announcements with that term somewhere in the job description. I was disappointed, however, to see the jobs were mostly IS functions, usually responsible for some type of intranet function. My disappointment lies in how narrowly focused the corporate world is viewing knowledge management. Intranets are useful tools in knowledge management, but companies seem to be saying that since they have one, they have knowledge management. Another quick fix.

The point of knowledge management is not to have a panacea by IS. The point is the need for a truly holistic approach to management. The players in knowledge management are all employees of the company, from CEO to boiler operator. Each employee has knowledge which combined into the knowledge of the whole, is what makes the company unique.

The *leaders* are who we are trying to identify. And if we get waylaid by this Intranet stuff, we'll miss the boat. The boat our competitors in other countries and other cultures are sailing off on.

A recent Special Libraries Association teleconference¹ contained a comment that we need to really act on knowledge management, even though the U.S. is ahead of the rest of the world. From an Intranet/technology standpoint, we do have the niftiest tools, *but we have a great cultural tide to shift*. Knowledge management is about sharing, storing, developing, and profiting from human knowledge. It is our heritage that our knowledge is our own, individual property, not a corporation's. The whole knowledge management concept goes against our grain, against our expectations of independence, capitalism, the me-generation, and the American way.

So, the **leaders** we are seeking are the change agents Rosabeth Moss Kantor wrote about in *Change Masters*² way back in 1983. (And note the "s" there in leaders.) The company that embraces knowledge management will have champions in Human Resources, Communications, Training, IS, Middle Management, and Information Resource Centers (a.k.a. libraries). The knowledge managing company may have a CIO coordinating various departments, but all of this is null and void if the CEO doesn't grasp the fact that he oversees a wealth of *knowledge*. That is the asset that sets the company apart from others. (continued on Page 2)

Roles (continued from Page 1)

I hope we don't see "Knowledge Manager" as a job title or buried in job descriptions. Instead, I hope to see the terms "creativity", "good communication skills", "flexibility", "analytical skills", etc. to rise in importance in job descriptions. They are the real skills that are needed and appreciated in the company that knows how to manage its knowledge.

References

- "Getting Out of the Box: The Knowledge Management Opportunity," Knight-Ridder Information, Inc. & Special Libraries Association Distance Learning Program, October 17, 1996
Rosabeth Moss Kanter, The Change Masters: Innovation & Entrepreneurship in the American Corporation. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983.

The Librarian's Role

"Getting Out of the Box: The Knowledge Management Opportunity," a teleconferenced distance learning program, provides a some insight into how information specialists, a.k.a. librarians, fit into the knowledge management picture. One panelist, John Peetz, **Chief Knowledge Officer** at Ernst & Young, gives a progressive overview of knowledge management. His role is to manage infrastructure, promote sharing and culture change, and protect intellectual capital. Their intranet is called the "KnowledgeWeb". Their librarians' role as "**Knowledge Navigators**" requires training of company associates to do their own searching.

Owens-Corning is also using the information resources department to manage the content of their intranet and to provide training to use it. Gathering resources to put on intranets is an obvious task for professionals trained in librarianship. Peetz commented that even traditional cataloging skills of librarians are taking on renewed importance by the need to catalog internal documents for intranets.

While librarians have done a lot of training in the past, they are being called upon to have more marketing and communications skills. Lois Remeikis became **Director of Knowledge and Information Management** at Booz, Allen & Hamilton in 1994. Some characteristics that helped bring her from library management to this position include strong communication and interpersonal skills, industry/subject expertise, being a team player *and* a leader. These are in addition to the information technology and organization skills traditionally owned by librarians.

To learn more about this, you can purchase the video and handouts for this course by contacting the Special Libraries Association, 1700 Eighteenth St., NW, Washington, DC 20009-2508, phone: (202) 234-4700, email: SLA1@CAPCON.NET

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Knowtes

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Vol. I, No. II, Spring 1997

Integrating Human Resources

HR can be viewed as the department that maximizes the company's human capital. The potential role of Human Resources in knowledge management is, however, often minimized. Regulations, forms, and legalities bog down HR making them bureaucratic machines. Little is invested in these departments that are viewed as necessary overhead.

No one likes to refer to employees as human capital, but that is a good way to define knowledge resources to executives that are still in the traditional manufacturing mindset. The commodity of the knowledge society is the human capacity to perform and produce from what one *knows*. Unlike manufactured end-products, human capital is based on information transactions over time. Strategic management of this commodity is therefore essential to secure and enhance the knowledge over time.

Human Resources can link employment systems into this human capital management. Because measuring human capital production is not as simple as numbers on a spreadsheet, the review and improvement systems currently in place by HR can be modified to be part of the company's *knowledge management plan*.

Education and Training

Strategic Human Resource Management ensures that the right people are available at the right time. If Human Resources is integrated into corporate planning, they can help predict the type of skills people will need and develop education and training programs to prepare knowledge workers.

Key in training workers to be prepared is to make training ongoing. HR can easily implement tracking of continuing education in the current review process. Weaknesses in individuals can be identified by the manager and a program for development can be planned with HR. By having an overall view of the workforce, HR can help plan group training programs by giving direction based on their knowledge of past individuals' coursework and overall gaps in education.

Pinpointing Potential

HR is also in the position to identify potential "stars" in the workforce. If HR is able to maintain personable interaction with employees, over time they can identify personalities and abilities that will flourish in future business environments. Diligent HR can help locate the smarts buried in the routine of production. (*continued on Page 2*)

Open discussion with managers and employees is key in pursuing this method of investing in the workforce.

Foster Creativity

Creativity is assumed to be an inbred gift that comes in periods of enlightenment. Creative innovation in reality comes from day to day work. There are many bright ideas, but a bright idea is not profitable unless it fits into the corporate framework. Innovation involves collaboration and planning. Creativity can be stimulated, however, with training and programs.

Human Resources can work with internal or outsourced trainers to develop creativity and innovation programs. HR is also in the position to develop cross-functional teams to be in these programs. Such teams are known to be more effective in creating and exploring. Knowledge creating companies need good Knowledge Management.

Human Resource Departments have the potential to grow into change agents in companies if they are allowed to function beyond traditional bureaucratic roles. As more of the routine HR tasks are outsourced, executives should position HR in their Knowledge Management Plan. HR already supports the internal knowledge bank and they have the professional skills and networks to implement the training and development aspect of Knowledge Management.

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Eugene B. McGregor, Jr. Strategic Management of Human Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991.

You Read, You Know: Additional Reading in Knowledge Management

- 1) "What the Future Holds for HR" by Maureen Minehan. HR Magazine, March 1997.
<http://www.shrm.org/hrmagazine/articles/0397fut.htm> Discusses HR role in innovation and that developing human capital involves tolerating diversity.
- 2) March 1997 issue of Management Directions is dedicated to Knowledge Management. Cost 12.95 pounds. Published by Institute of Management's Information Centre. Address: Lavis Marketing, 73 Lime Walk, Headington, Oxford, OX3 7AD, Tel: 0345 023 736 Fax: 01865 750079.
- 3) Knowledge Ability Home page link: "Working by Wire White Paper: Team Knowledge Management a Computer Mediated Approach", by Dr. John Gundry and Dr. George Metes, is a pitch for their computer conferencing service, but interesting nonetheless. <http://www.knowab.co.uk/wbwteam.html>
- 4) Edvinson, Leif and Michael Malone. Intellectual Capital. Realizing Your Company's True Value by Finding Its Hidden Brainpower. Harper Business: Harper Collins, 1997. ISBN 0-88730-841-4

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Knowtes *The Knowledge Management Thinkletter*

by Burton Knowledge Services

Vol. I, No. III, Summer 1997

Knowledge Management: An Integrated Science?

Large companies have the greatest potential to reap the benefits of successful Knowledge Management because of the sheer volume of intellectual capital they possess. I fear most will fail. They must make a big investment and the key part of the investment is in an area where companies have historically failed. Knowledge Management's key investment is in the human factor.

A Dow Chemical manager is quoted as saying, "In the future, the whole world of knowledge management should not be an applied science as it is now, but an integrated science."¹ Instead of KM teams creating and applying policies and programs, KM should grow into application by every employee. Every employee, therefore, must "buy in" to the Knowledge Management program.

The science of KM has not gotten off to a good start to winning over workers. The lingo of KM quickly diminunized employees by referring to them as human capital. It's tone often represents ivory tower elitism. KM threatens to control employee individuality: their personal knowledge. Great incentives to motivate employees to embrace KM for the greater good of the corporation? After the corporate roller coaster ride the past ten years have given them?

Small companies have the greatest chance of success because employees feel they have a stake. Small company employees are more empowered. They are closer to the heart of the company and you have to win the heart to capture the mind. Small companies also tend to keep things simple.

In a recent discussion with a knowledge management team, there was concern that their KM program would turn into another drawn out, dead end exercise that alienated employees and successfully created mounds of paperwork, policies, and meetings. They wanted to get through the program creation process quickly and have a practical, usable end product. I think that is achievable. They probably already have a lot of pieces of the plan and just need to fill in the gaps. By keeping the plan simple without a lot of catchy lingo or hoopla, employees are less likely to see this as another management whim. Investing integrity into KM implementation will help make it integrated.

¹Leif Edvinsson and Michael S. Malone *Intellectual Capital: Realizing Your Company's True Value by Finding its Hidden BrainPower* New York: HarperCollins, 1997 p. 144.

Out With The Old & In With The New?

Two important goals of maintaining corporate knowledge is to capture existing/past knowledge and to create new knowledge. Of course, creating is more fun than knowledge inventories and archives. The transfer of held knowledge or *traditions* is when it gets interesting. In fact, this may be more challenging than creating because people are resistant to sharing their hard fought knowledge and people are resistant to taking advice from others.

Also, transferring information is different from transferring knowledge. Karl-Erik Sveiby¹ writes, "There are distinct differences in how information and tradition transfer knowledge. While tradition transfers a 'whole,' a process-of-knowing between people, information is a potentiality, over which the supplier/creator has no power...Information might be a trigger, but can not be meaningful knowledge in itself." He goes on to say that facts/information will be considered meaningless and knowledge will be regarded as dynamic, action oriented. Value is created with human interpretation of information in to tacit knowledge.

So when we develop a knowledge plan, how much should be invested in transferring knowledge and how much should be invested in creating new knowledge? This is not an either/or situation, but should carry on the integrated approach. Creativity should be used in developing new ways of *using* traditions and new ways of *transferring* traditions. Conversely, it is hypocritical to believe you can create new ideas without considering prior art. Knowledge Management isn't about wiping out the old, it is about nurturing it for the future.

¹Sveiby, Karl-Erik. "Transfer of Knowledge and the Information Processing Professions." European Management Journal, Vol. 14, No. 4, August 1996, p. 387.

Mark Your Calendar

The 2nd World Congress on the Management of Intellectual Capital and Innovation, sponsored by the Innovation Research Centre at McMaster University, will be held January 21-23, 1998, in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. For additional information, contact Dr. C. K. Bart, Director, at 905-525-9140 or bartck@mcmaster.ca

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Knowtes

The Knowledge Management Thinkletter

by Burton Knowledge Services

Vol. I, No. IV, Fall 1997

The Knowledge Management Plan

Everyone wants to say they practice Knowledge Management. For some it means changing job titles from "Information Manager" to "Knowledge Manager". For others it means installing an Intranet. At the Executive level it is a portion of the Intellectual Capital report, probably of less importance than Structural Capital. From the practical point of view of middle management, a concrete method to develop Knowledge Management starts with a Knowledge Management Plan.

The goal is to prepare a simple, usable plan. 10 pages or less.

Why bother? If you want the company to *invest in Knowledge Management*, you have to demonstrate that you know what you have and that you have a vision. You need to effectively communicate the most illusive, yet perhaps the most valuable, part of the company. You will need to quantify the intangible.

You have probably done Strategic Plans and, if you've ever had your own business, a Business Plan. A Knowledge Management Plan follows the same format, but focuses on the Knowledge Capital of your company. If you have active Strategic or Business Plans, it would be a time-saver and provide more consistency if you mimic their outlines.

The audience depends on who is driving the need for such a plan. It may be a very straight forward guide for managers of a localized division of a multinational. Or it can cover the whole corporation. An upstart R&D company may want to use it as a tool for encouraging investors or an acquisition. Output measures from the KM plan can also be included in the company's Intellectual Capital report. Identifying the audience and the purpose of the plan is very important and should be communicated to all team members.

The team developing the plan may include the developers of those plans, but you would want to invite internal experts on knowledge management concepts. An IS person, a librarian/information resource manager, human resources, and a couple of visionaries should be involved (see Knowtes, Vol. I, Issue 1 about KM role-players).

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

The first and probably most time-consuming section would be an Environmental Analysis, similar to that of the Strategic Plan. It involves an inventory (continued on Page 2)

of your knowledge assets. Define the type of workers you have; their education, their travel and interrelationship patterns. Identify the development programs; the educational support programs, the in-house training and cross-training, and counseling. Map out communications systems, both electronic and manual (don't forget the water cooler!).

Part of your team, especially the IS and HR members, may concentrate on this introspective aspect. Other specialists will need to gather external environmental information. Team members should be provided with the most up-to-date publications on Knowledge Management and Intellectual Capital. There is a flurry of conferences on KM to network with other professionals. Trying to seek out competitor's Knowledge Management assets will be tough. Competitor Intelligence professionals and librarians will be invaluable team members during this task. You may need to outsource some of these activities if you do not have these internal resources. Obtaining benchmarking information by phone interviews would be an example of a task better done by a third party.

ENVIRONMENTAL FORECAST

Well done environmental analysis can be a treasure house of new ideas of what new programs you can install and what works and what doesn't. Analyzing the collected information should be a whole team effort. From there the group should be able to project an environmental forecast. Here everyone will have to be a futurist. This is why a couple of good visionaries and a lot of reading will help out. You will want to forecast five years ahead, but then some discussion should project longer term.

Technology forecasts will be of importance, but the hardest and probably more important forecast will be determining what skills and education workers will need to have in five years. These forecasts will be essential in developing a plan of programs to meet future knowledge needs.

MISSIONS AND GOALS

The process is winding down to the nitty-gritty. You've done missions and goals plenty of times for other plans, so it should be a breeze! The tough part is keeping it simple. It will be better to accomplish a few well defined goals than to end up with an overwhelming list that ends up buried beneath that in-box. The plan can also turn into an employee relations nightmare if it is misunderstood or poorly presented. Remember, the Knowledge Management planning process is continual and you will get another chance to add more goals and projects in the next cycle.

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